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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000030

SIPDIS

STATE FOR P, T, AND EUR

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SUBJECT: THEMES FOR THE VISIT OF SLOVAK MFA STATE SECRETARY
IVAN KORCOK

REF: A. A. 03 BRATISLAVA 1375

[1](#)B. B. 03 BRATISLAVA 1388

CLASSIFIED BY: CDA SCOTT N THAYER FOR REASON 1.4B.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: STATE SECRETARY FOR THE SLOVAK MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IVAN KORCOK (PRONOUNCED KOR-CHOK) WILL VISIT WASHINGTON JANUARY 14-16 TO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE SLOVAKIA PLACES ON THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP AND TO INTENSIFY U.S.-SLOVAK DIALOGUE ON BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ISSUES (REF A). THE DECISION TO VISIT COMES PARTLY FROM A FEELING THAT THE U.S. IS CONCENTRATING ON "PROBLEM CHILDREN" IN EUROPE AND ELSEWHERE, WITH LESS ATTENTION FOCUSED ON SMALL BUT FAITHFUL ALLIES LIKE SLOVAKIA. KORCOK WILL BE ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN HEARING WASHINGTON'S VIEWS ON NATO ACCESSION SCENARIOS AND THE ISTANBUL SUMMIT, WORKING TOGETHER ON UKRAINE AND BELARUS, AND U.S. ATTENDANCE AT THE MARCH 19-20 BRATISLAVA CONFERENCE ON EUROPEAN SECURITY. INTERLOCUTORS SHOULD ENGAGE KORCOK ON U.S. PRIORITIES WHERE THE SLOVAKS CAN TAKE A STRONGER ROLE, AND ENCOURAGE THEIR ACTIVISM BOTH UNILATERALLY AND IN INTERNATIONAL FORA SUCH AS NATO AND THE EU. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) SLOVAKIA IS LOOKING FORWARD IN THE COMING MONTHS TO NATO AND EU ACCESSION. DUE TO THIS, PUBLIC OPINION POLLS REVEAL THAT MOST SLOVAKS CONSIDER THE GOS FOREIGN POLICY "SUCCESSFUL." THIS IS THE ONLY AREA WHERE THE DZURINDA GOVERNMENT GETS A FAVORABLE RATING. (NOTE: THE PUBLIC IS MUCH MORE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT ECONOMIC REFORMS, AS 94 NEW LAWS TOOK EFFECT JANUARY 1, 2004, RESULTING IN PRICE INCREASES FOR CONSUMER ITEMS ACROSS THE BOARD.) PLAYING ON THIS STRENGTH, THE MFA IS PLANNING TO FOCUS ON "NICHE CAPABILITIES" IN FOREIGN POLICY AS MUCH AS IN DEFENSE. AREAS WHERE SLOVAKIA WOULD LIKE TO ASSUME A MORE PROMINENT ROLE INCLUDE RELATIONS WITH THE BALKANS; ENCOURAGING REFORM IN UKRAINE, BELARUS, MOLDOVA, AND PERHAPS IN OTHER FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS; AND THE MIDDLE EAST.

[1](#)3. (C) SLOVAKIA, ALONG WITH OTHER ACCESSION COUNTRIES, IS INCREASINGLY CURIOUS ABOUT U.S. PLANS FOR BRINGING IN THE NEW NATO MEMBERS. (REF B). WHILE A CELEBRATION WILL BE IMPORTANT, WE SHOULD ALSO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING MILITARY REFORM, ALLOCATING SUFFICIENT BUDGET FOR FORCE 2010, AND DEVELOPING CAPABILITIES THAT MEET THE CHANGING NEEDS OF NATO. SLOVAKIA DESERVES CREDIT FOR HOLDING TO THE 2 PERCENT OF GDP LEVEL FOR DEFENSE SPENDING EVEN IN THE FACE OF TOUGH ECONOMIC CHOICES (ADMITTEDLY THROUGH CREATIVE ACCOUNTING). KORCOK WILL APPRECIATE EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FOR SLOVAK TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ, ESPECIALLY AS THE GOS PREPARES TO BEEF UP ITS DEMINING CONTINGENT IN IRAQ WITH 30 MILITARY POLICE FOR SECURITY. (PM DZURINDA PLANS TO VISIT SLOVAK TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN JANUARY 23.) KORCOK SHOULD BE REMINDED THAT OTHER ASPECTS OF THE GWOT SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED; FOR EXAMPLE, THE DECREASE IN THE BUDGET FOR THE SLOVAK INTELLIGENCE SERVICE HAMPERS THE GOS ABILITY NOT ONLY TO COMBAT TERRORISM AND ORGANIZED CRIME, BUT ALSO TO PROVIDE INFORMATION NEEDED FOR SECURITY CLEARANCES.

[1](#)5. (C) SLOVAKIA VIEWS ITSELF AS BEING ON THE FRONT LINES WITH UKRAINE AND BELARUS AND WELCOME THE EU'S ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT TOWARDS THOSE TWO COUNTRIES. IT WOULD BE GOOD FOR KORCOK TO HEAR OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT NEXT STEPS IN BOTH COUNTRIES AND HOW SLOVAKIA AND OTHER NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES CAN BE USEFUL.

[1](#)6. (C) PLANNING FOR THE MARCH 19-20 BRATISLAVA CONFERENCE CONTINUES APACE, AND WAS FINALIZED DURING MEETINGS THIS WEEKEND. KORCOK SHOULD BE AN EFFECTIVE ADVOCATE FOR IT AND USG ATTENDANCE.

[1](#)7. (C) BIO NOTE: KORCOK IS WIDELY VIEWED AS THE LIKELY SUCCESSOR TO FONMIN KUKAN IF THE LATTER WINS THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN APRIL. FORMERLY DCM IN THE SLOVAK NATO MISSION, KORCOK HAS STRONG TRANS-ATLANTICIST BELIEFS AND DOESN'T HESITATE TO EXPRESS THEM.

THAYER

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